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DCI ADDRESS TO THE LOS ANGELES WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Transcript of the Question & Answer Period Following the Speech

MOD: Thank you very much indeed Mr. Colby.

DCI: I believe it's your custom to ask some questions, and while I can't promise you a direct answer to every question you might raise, I would precede the session with the statement that there are no indiscreet questions; there are only indiscreet answers.

MOD: Well with that forewarning we will start on the questions, which I hope you will keep as direct as possible, please.

QUEST: How long has Air America, allegedly a CIA operated airline, been in existence, and how long was it before the American people were aware of it?

DCI: Well, Air America was formed many years ago. It came into public prominence during the South East Asian problems in Laos and in Viet Nam. There have been a number of allegations over time that this had a high degree of connection with CIA, and the allegation that CIA has such a direct responsibility for Air America's activity is one of the items we did not object to Mr. Marchetti putting in his book.

MOD: Another question please.

QUEST: Does Russia or any other country have satellites comparable to America's "Spy in the Sky"?

DCI: Yes. (Pause, laughter) Comparable.

MOD: All right sir.

QUEST: What is the difference between your responsibility to the legislative and to the executive branch of government?

DCI: Well I was appointed by the President and the commission that is on the wall behind my desk says that I serve at the pleasure of the President. I obviously had to be confirmed by the Senate according to the Constitution and, as the head of an agency, I appear before the Congress to discuss any matters of interest to them and to request an annual appropriation from them.

MOD: Another question please.

QUEST: What were some of the suggestions about how we should operate in Viet Nam that were not followed, and would you elaborate on Mr. McCone's introduction. (Laughter)

DCI: Well, I think what Mr. McCone was referring to and I stand to be corrected and I know he is not reluctant to do so if appropriate (laughter), I think the thing he was referring to was that I believed for a very long time that the key to the Viet Nam War was that it was a people's war and that it could only be fought with the participation of the people, and that the key to the question was how to get them to participate. We conducted a number of activities trying to get this going, but the situation did deteriorate rather badly there and it became primarily a military war until after 1967 or 1968 when we put a rather massive effort into engaging the participation of the people and I think with some positive effects.

MOD: Another question.

QUEST: Would you please give your assessment of the situation in Portugal and Venezuela?

DCI: Well, the situation in Portugal as you see from the newspapers is quite turbulent at the moment. I frankly have been away from Washington for the last three or four days during which a number of things have happened, and I'd rather not give a very precise assessment on that regard right here in public. I think that there is no question that the overthrow of the government there by the military leaders reflected a considerable degree of unease among the people and the military forces, especially in Portugal, as to the success or lack thereof of their programs in Africa. The question then, once having released the controls that have been in existence for several decades in Portugal, is as to the degree of disruption and change that you are starting on. I don't think that is entirely clear right now from the information available to me at this distance. In the Venezuelan question, I think they are engaged in the normal process of government--constitutional government--down there. Again I am about three or four days out of date I am ashamed to say, but it was my impression they did start a new government and that the new government is going to be a little more Nationalistic, perhaps, than the previous ones but that's about all I think I can say about that one.

MOD: There was a question over there. (Question inaudible) The lady's question was on what she calls negative aspects of CIA. She specifically refers to Papandreou's alleged statement that the CIA participated in the overthrow of the Greek government; also to the film, "Z"; and to "The State of Seige"... all very negative accounts.

DCI: No, CIA did not. CIA had connections with various people in Greece in the government and private citizens; people who provided information to us from time to time; people that we knew, but we did not bring about the change in government when Papadopoulos took over the government. I think that probably takes care of the film "Z". "The State of Seige" is a story which I think is a kind of extreme version of projecting a little thing into a great big thing. Mr. Mittrione who was assassinated in Uruguay was not a CIA officer or agent. He was a member of AID, the Agency for International Development. He was kidnapped and murdered. Some of the people who did this to him, the Tupamaros, may have believed that they were striking in some fashion at CIA, but they were not.

MOD: Another question, please. Has the Central Intelligence Agency ever been involved directly or indirectly in the overthrow of any government? (laughter)

DCI: I think the easiest way to answer that one is the rather traditional one that our press representative uses on the phone in the middle of the night when asked a very difficult question: No comment. (laughter)

MOD: Yes, Sir.

QUEST: How does the CIA assess the American position relative to the possible opening now of the Suez Canal?

DCI: Well, I don't think we assess the American position. That is a question for our policy people to decide. What we do assess is what the likely results of an opening of the Suez Canal would be in terms of the uses made of it by various foreign powers. It obviously would have a beneficial effect to Egypt in the sense of giving it some revenues. It would also do some good to the transport of oil by tankers but not the super tankers. It would have other substantial value in economic terms through ordinary freighters and so forth moving. On the strategic sense, it would facilitate the movement of warships if the Egyptians agreed to allow them to go through between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. The question, however, as to whether the Soviets would thereby be able to place an overpowering amount of power into the Indian Ocean is not at all determined by the mere opening of the Canal. It depends on Egyptian policy. It depends on their need for those forces in other parts of the world, and the degree to which they can draw down other forces to send them into the Indian Ocean, and, of course, a factor in the total equation is the comparative ability of other powers, including the United States, to move forces into the Indian Ocean. It's like many questions in international relationships. There are no simple, easy, "A equals B" answers to many of these problems. There are a lot of factors involved and you have to put them all together, but I think that the answer is that it would not, by itself, mean any major change in the balance of power.

MOD: Another question, please.

QUEST: Is the CIA combatting international terrorist kidnappings and, a second question, unrelated, is the Soviet Union trying to get to a first strike nuclear capability?

DCI: With respect to the terrorists, the CIA is conducting intelligence operations aimed at helping us, our country, to meet a very dangerous threat to international civilized transport in society. So, to a certain degree the answer is "yes", but I don't know whether that equates with the word, "combat". No, we are not "combatting" them other than conducting intelligence operations to learn what is going on. Now with respect to the Soviet development, they are engaged in a program of upgrading their strategic weapons. These have all been discussed in the press, this new generation of missiles that is in the course of testing, which do have the MIRVs on them, or Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles, and these

certainly are an element in developing Soviet power. I think that the Soviet leadership does not like to be number two. I don't think they've faced the problem quite yet as to whether they have the choice between parity and going on to be the only number one. But I think that they are developing their force and increasing their strength in the course of their development program.

MOD: Question right here in the front.

QUEST: The question is in connection with the Bay of Pigs. What was the rationale of the United States in invading a sovereign country?

DCI: The National Security Act of 1947 says that the CIA will do various things and then it says, "...and will perform such other functions relating to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct." Now, the CIA has done a number of activities which have been directed by the National Security Council. The Bay of Pigs was directed by the National Security Council. I think it is perhaps difficult sometimes to transport oneself back fifteen or twenty years into the political atmosphere of another time and to see how things looked from that point of view if we look at them now. There is no question that the National Security Council will express national policy, and if national policy is to conduct a confrontation of an expanding subversive, or politically aggressive, or even militarily aggressive power in a lot of parts of the world, that the CIA will be one tool that national policy will have available to do that. The government on some occasions has felt it desirable to be able to use somewhat quieter means than sending regular United States forces into situations, and they've wanted to do something more than merely deliver a diplomatic protest, and that provision of the National Security Act is designed to give our government that weapon in our arsenal. The weapon will be used according to national policy at any one time just as the other weapons in our arsenal are used according to national policy at the time in question. Now, I think that really does explain that we were facing a totally different atmosphere at the time of the Bay of Pigs, and concern about the effect that Cuba might have in the whole Latin American area. The Cubans did try to export subversion for some time. They didn't do very well, but nonetheless there was a concern about the existence of that possibility at that time.

MOD: We have time for two more questions.

QUEST: What events does the CIA see as essential to promoting a lasting peace in the Middle East?

DCI: Well, my name isn't Henry Kissinger. (Loud laughter) I think from an assessment that there are obviously some very difficult problems in the Middle East. There are emotional; there are political; there are economic problems among various of the nations in that area, and what has to be done is that there has to gradually grow a degree of respect and a willingness to negotiate among them which will permit the resolution of their

conflicts by some means other than the use of armed force, and, of course, that's the process our policy-makers are endeavoring to assist. I think that's a very accurate view in my opinion, of the answer that needs to occur sooner or later. That's not to say it is easy! Some of these economic and political and cultural forces are very strong indeed, but in some way, since they all do live within the same geography, they're going to have to try to find some other way of resolving the differences between them other than by shooting.

MOD: A final question, after which Mr. McCone will adjourn the meeting.

QUEST: How would you respond to the statement that the CIA is really the invisible government of the United States?

DCI: I just don't think that's true. I think that CIA tries to assist our government in making its decisions. We do not conduct operations involving the United States' domestic affairs. We are limited to foreign intelligence and such other activities as the National Security Council may from time to time direct. In my confirmation hearing I assured the Congress that we would respect that process and that we would not engage in domestic activities in this country other than in the foreign intelligence field and I think that, therefore, there is no basis for a charge that CIA is an invisible government. (Applause)

Mr. McCone: Thank you very much Director William Colby. I know that your remarks, your very interesting statement, and your very precise answers to the penetrating questions were of great interest to all that were here. I might add that I learned a good deal about the Agency even though I spent four years there. (Laughter) So I think that probably is a measure of the appreciation of the people in this room for the informative talk you gave. Thank you very much for coming to Los Angeles and honoring us with your presence here. The meeting stands adjourned. (Applause)

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